



Matthew D. Thompson, Ed.D., Superintendent  
Alice Anderson, Chairperson  
Bill R. Morgan, Vice Chairperson

High Expectations + Compassion = Growth for Every Student

Daniel Freeman, Ed.D., Board Member  
Sharon Smith-Breiner, Board Member

October 23, 2017

Chairman Ajit Pai  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th Street SW,  
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Pai:

I am writing today in response to the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) Public Notice which, among other things, considers changes to the E-Rate program. Before delving into my response to the proposed changes, I want to thank the FCC for your continued support for the E-Rate program and for the critical programmatic and policy changes the commission adopted in 2014. The E-Rate program provides critical discounts to assist schools (like mine) to obtain affordable telecommunications and internet access.

Montgomery County Schools is a public school district of approximately 4,900 students located approximately 35 miles east of Lexington, Kentucky. E-Rate funding is critical to our district. We are a rural community. Based on the 2017-2018 E-Rate Discount Date we have 3,788 students NSLP Eligible. Our Category 1 District Discount Percentage is 90% and our Category 2 District Discount Percentage is 85%. We have used our Category 1 E-Rate dollars to provide increased connectivity speed to our three elementary schools, our intermediate school and our transportation department. This speed is necessary for the schools to be productive. Our four other eligible schools are on the same campus and have fiber connecting them to the state provided service. We have used Category 2 funds to build up our infrastructure which was not able to handle the increased bandwidth we received from the state. This increased bandwidth and equipment allowed us the necessary infrastructure to support a 1-to-1 initiative in grades 5-12. Teachers, students and staff have been able to utilize current technology tools. Student and teacher access is critical to provide the instruction needed to develop the skills needed for today's job market. The improved infrastructure allows teachers to provide individualized instruction, allows students to take advantage of dual credit and online classes, allows teachers to provide varied ways to present curriculum, allows teachers to quickly assess student learning to guide instruction, and allows many other instructional benefits.

The E-Rate program is a program succeeding in its mission. As the FCC moves forward with this public notice, it is prudent to remain focused on the fact that E-Rate is a program that works. Any changes to the E-Rate program should be focused on expanding a successful program that has yet to reach its full potential and ensuring the FCC remains a good steward of the changes adopted 2014, allowing those changes to progress and play out as intended.

E-Rate played a critical role is the rapid and significant expansion of connectivity in schools, and the 2014 modernization was a much needed update to ensure more schools and libraries are connected to broadband. The E-Rate's investment in Category 2 Wi-Fi and internal connections funding is extremely valuable and could not be replaced by school, district or state funds.

Our district has utilized most of our E-rate Category 2 allotment for the following: over a three year period we have purchased wireless access points to update, increase, and improve wireless connectivity in the schools with grades 5 – 12; purchased necessary licenses for wireless access points; purchased wiring for additional access points; purchased a district core switch to replace the outdated and ineffective core; purchased switches for all schools to reduce the number of obsolete switches; purchased necessary transceivers and cables for the installation of switches; purchased UPS – uninterruptible power supplies – for the wiring closets; purchased allowed maintenance agreements on internal connections; purchased managed broadband services. We still have outdated equipment that we need to replace and have planned to utilize all of our E-rate Category 2 allotment. This equipment enables us to provide quality instruction for the students of our district as stated in our second paragraph. This money is critical for our students.

In closing, I reiterate my district's continued, strong support for and reliance upon the E-Rate program for being able to access and afford the high-speed connectivity that is so central to our students' learning. Thank you for considering these comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Matthew D. Thompson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Matthew D. Thompson, Ed.D.  
Superintendent